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Letter dated 24 October 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 24 October 1996, addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Osman Ertuğ, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 58, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hüseyin E. ÇELEM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Letter dated 24 October 1996 from Mr. Osman Ertuğ addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to respond to the letter dated 14 October 1996 addressed to you by the Greek Cypriot Representative at the United Nations in connection with the recent border incident in Cyprus (A/51/498-S/1996/851 dated 15 October 1996).

The said letter is a typical example of the blatant distortion of facts and reckless exploitation of unfortunate events by the Greek Cypriot side for political purposes. The true facts pertaining to this incident, which happened behind our ceasefire lines in Turkish Cypriot territory, is as follows:

At approximately 0735 hours local time on 13 October 1996, a Greek Cypriot wearing civilian clothes violated our borders and entered 200 metres into the territory of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus west of Güvercinlik village, which had previously been the scene of a deadly Greek commando attack on one of our sentry posts, resulting in the murder of a Turkish Cypriot soldier and the serious wounding of another. Hence, the tension in the area was naturally very high.

The Greek Cypriot in question continued his advance within our territory despite three verbal warnings made by our sentry in the area. There was also an attempt on the part of our sentry to apprehend the Greek Cypriot in question, who did not heed the verbal warnings to stop, but the latter managed to escape. Upon this, our sentry fired three shots in the air to warn him to stop. As he failed to do so he was fired upon and was hit.

A subsequent autopsy carried out by our authorities, in the presence of military and medical officers from the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), revealed that the deceased was hit by two bullets, one of which fatally wounded him. Both shots were fired from a distance of approximately 50 metres, and, contrary to what the Greek Cypriot side claims, there was absolutely no shot fired at him at close range after he fell on the ground. During the autopsy, a commando knife and a metal string which is commonly used for strangulation were found in the boots of the deceased, which suggests that his intentions in entering a highly restricted military area may not have been as innocent as the Greek Cypriot side would have one believe. Information that the aforesaid was a member of the Greek Cypriot militia reinforces suspicions in that regard. The claim that he had entered the area "to collect snails" is not convincing, since there is ample space in South Cyprus for such activity. In any event, there was clearly no means for the Turkish Cypriot sentries to know the intruder's intentions.

Meanwhile, in his first statement to the Greek Cypriot broadcasting corporation about the incident, the son-in-law of the deceased, who is alleged by the Greek Cypriot side to have been an "eyewitness" to the incident, stated: "I told him that it was a prohibited area and that we should not enter it, but he did not listen to me and went into it without heeding the warnings." There

was, therefore, no possibility that the deceased was not aware of the danger involved in violating a military restricted area, particularly in view of the prevailing tension.

As for the attempt to accuse or implicate the Turkish Forces in the incident, I wish to remind all concerned that, as UNFICYP is also fully aware, the area is under the control of the Turkish Cypriot Security Forces. The Greek Cypriot representative's slanderous accusations against Turkey in this regard are clearly politically motivated and are so base as to merit no detailed reply. Suffice it to say that Turkey is in Northern Cyprus in order to prevent yet another Greek invasion of Cyprus, as was the case between 1963 and 1974, and the repetition of the crimes committed by the Greek Cypriots, in collaboration with Greece, against the Turkish Cypriot people. The recent incidents, if they prove anything, demonstrate the other side's determination to pursue a policy of escalation and tension on the island, with a view to exploiting it against Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot side, regardless of its human cost to both sides.

In closing, I would like to reiterate our call for direct dialogue as a means of reducing tension and preventing the recurrence of such unfortunate incidents. I would also like to express the hope that the Greek Cypriot side will abandon its counterproductive and adventurist policy of escalating the tension and come to the negotiating table without further delay.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 58, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Osman ERTUĞ
Representative
Turkish Republic of
Northern Cyprus